

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation. This decision by Sinclair Broadcasting is the antithesis of democracy, in that it labels as "news" a thinly-disguised right-wing screed against one of the candidates for president. It is as if a media conglomerate were to force its affiliates to air Michael Moore's "Fahrenheit 9/11" as news; the reaction of the FCC would be immediate and forceful, as it should be in the case of Sinclair Broadcasting's outrageous action. Simply because the target in Sinclair's action is the candidate opposed to the incumbent administration does not absolve the FCC of its responsibilities.

The fundamental problem here is the fact that the media conglomerates, and the government agencies that are supposed to represent the public, have forgotten that the airwaves belong to the people, and are made available to broadcast networks as a privilege, not a right. This privilege is to be used according to a set of rules and regulations that hold them responsible to act in the public interest. Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve that public interest. Its actions in this case of a so-called "news" broadcast has shown that it is willing to openly flout and disregard the commitment it made in exchange for the privilege of using the airwaves. The FCC, the agency charged with protecting our, the people's, interest, must act immediately and strongly in this case.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. Thank you.